

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

*This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.*

**LISTING OF CLAIMS:**

1. (Currently Amended) A catheter comprising:
  - a proximal shaft;
  - an intermediate member connected to a front side of said proximal shaft;
  - a distal shaft connected to a front portion of said intermediate member;
  - a hub provided to a rear side of said proximal shaft;
  - a balloon connected at a front portion of said distal shaft;
  - an inner tube shaft coaxially extends through said distal shaft and said balloon and connected to a distal end of said balloon;
  - a balloon lumen for communicating said hub to the inside of said balloon; and
  - a guide wire lumen for allowing a guide wire to be inserted through said guide wire lumen, said guide wire lumen including a distal side aperture positioned on the distal side from a front end of said balloon and a proximal side aperture formed in a side surface of said intermediate member;
  - a front portion of said distal shaft is configured as a grooved portion having a groove, the front portion of said distal shaft having the groove being positioned on a rear side of said balloon;
  - a rear portion of said distal shaft is free of grooves;
  - wherein said grooved portion is provided at a portion adjacent to said balloon and extends toward a proximal side of said distal shaft; and

said groove possessing a depth which changes relative to a longitudinal extent of the distal shaft so as to be relatively larger on a distal side of said grooved portion and relatively smaller on a proximal side of said grooved portion; and said proximal shaft includes a main shaft portion and a proximal shaft insertion portion formed by spiral slit on a front portion of said proximal shaft and inserted into a rear portion of said intermediate member, and a pitch of said spiral slit becomes gradually shorter toward a distal end of said spiral slit.

2. (Original) A catheter according to claim 1, wherein said groove is formed into spiral shape or annular shape.

3. (Original) A catheter according to claim 2, wherein the pitch of said spiral or annular groove is changed in the direction toward the distal end of said catheter.

4. (Original) A catheter according to claim 1, wherein the depth of said groove is in a range of 30 to 90% of the wall thickness of said distal shaft.

5. (Canceled)

6. (Original) A catheter according to claim 1, wherein said grooved portion includes a first region, a second region, and a third region disposed in this order from the distal side, and the depth of said groove in said second region is larger than that of said groove in said third region and the depth of said groove in said first region is larger than that of said groove in said second region.

7. (Canceled)

8. (Original) A catheter according to claim 1, wherein said distal shaft is made from a polymer material having a Shore D hardness of 70 or more and a flexural modulus of 11,000 kgf/cm<sup>2</sup> or more.

9. (Original) A catheter according to claim 1, wherein the product of an outer diameter (S) of said distal shaft of said grooved portion and a flexural modulus (E) of a material forming said distal shaft is in a range of 500 kgf/cm or more.

10. (Original) A catheter according to claim 1, wherein said distal shaft has a distal portion and a proximal portion, and the rigidity of said proximal portion of said distal shaft is lower than that of said proximal shaft and is higher than that of said distal portion of said distal shaft.

11. (Original) A catheter according to claim 1, wherein said groove is formed in an outer surface of said distal shaft.

Claims 12.-24. (Canceled)

25. (Currently Amended) A catheter comprising:

a proximal shaft;

an intermediate member connected to a front side of said proximal shaft;

a distal shaft connected to a front portion of said intermediate member;  
a hub provided to a rear side of said proximal shaft;  
a balloon connected at a front portion of said distal shaft;  
an inner tube shaft coaxially extends through said distal shaft and said balloon  
and connected to a distal end of said balloon;

a balloon lumen for communicating said hub to the inside of said balloon;  
a guide wire lumen for allowing a guide wire to be inserted through said guide  
wire lumen, said guide wire lumen including a distal side aperture positioned on the  
distal side from a front end of said balloon and a proximal side aperture formed in a  
side surface of said intermediate member;

a front portion of said distal shaft is configured as a grooved portion having a  
groove, the front portion of said distal shaft having the groove being positioned on a  
rear side of said balloon;

a rear portion of said distal shaft is free of grooves;  
wherein said grooved portion is provided at a portion adjacent to said balloon  
and extends toward a proximal side of said distal shaft;

said groove has a depth in a range of 30 to 90% of a wall thickness of said  
distal shaft, ~~and~~

said groove possessing a depth which changes relative to a longitudinal  
extent of the distal shaft so as to be relatively larger on a distal side of said grooved  
portion and relatively smaller on a proximal side of said grooved portion; and

said proximal shaft includes a main shaft portion and a proximal shaft  
insertion portion formed by spiral slit on a front portion of said proximal shaft and

inserted into a rear portion of said intermediate member, and a pitch of said spiral slit becomes gradually shorter toward a distal end of said spiral slit.

Claims 26.-28. (Canceled)

29. (Currently Amended) A catheter comprising:

a proximal shaft;

an intermediate member connected to a front side of said proximal shaft;

a distal shaft connected to a front portion of said intermediate member;

a hub provided to a rear side of said proximal shaft;

a balloon connected at a front portion of said distal shaft;

an inner tube shaft coaxially extends through said distal shaft and said balloon and connected to a distal end of said balloon,

a balloon lumen for communicating said hub to the inside of said balloon; and

a guide wire lumen for allowing a guide wire to be inserted through said guide wire lumen, said guide wire lumen including a distal side aperture positioned on the distal side from a front end of said balloon and a proximal side aperture formed in a side surface of said intermediate member; wherein

a front portion, positioned on a rear side from said balloon, of said distal shaft is configured as a grooved portion having a groove;

a rear portion of said distal shaft is free of grooves; ~~and~~

wherein said grooved portion is provided at a portion adjacent to said balloon and extends toward a proximal side of said distal shaft; and

said proximal shaft includes a main shaft portion and a proximal shaft insertion portion formed by spiral slit on a front portion of said proximal shaft and inserted into a rear portion of said intermediate member, and a pitch of said spiral slit becomes gradually shorter toward a distal end of said spiral slit.